

A WORKING LEAGUE

The United States as a Living Example of Peoples Brought Together
by Common Ideals and Common Dangers

[By Samuel J. Graham, Assistant Attorney General of the United States, in the New York Times on December 22, 1918.]

Will you permit me, in connection with the much discussed league of nations, to call attention briefly to some historical facts which I have not seen alluded to, which paved the way to the league of nations which was formed when the constitution of the United States was adopted and which indicate that this consummation was finally accomplished through the medium of the pre-existent league of friendship between the thirteen colonies, based upon common wrongs, common ideals of justice and liberty and common hopes? The thirteen original colonies were joined in a league of friendship based upon wrongs, ideals and hopes, and so conducted the revolutionary war for three years before the adoption of the articles of confederation. The United States and the allies have been in a league of friendship since the United States entered this war, a league of friendship growing out of common wrongs, and, it is to be hoped, common ideals and common hopes. Their armies have been under one common commander, the blood of their soldiers has been poured out in a common stream, their navies have been one, they have pooled their financial, industrial, and economic resources, and for all the purposes of this war, at least, have been in substance a league of nations without formal covenants—a league based upon common wrongs, ideals, and hopes. Now to the facts to which I wish to call attention.

The port of Boston was closed by order of the English government by what is known as the Boston Port bill, which closed the port to navigation. There had been also passed by parliament what is known as the regulation act, by which the charter of the Colony of Massachusetts was annulled without any previous notice, and its free government destroyed, and a third act which provided that any Magistrate, soldier, or officer in Massachusetts who should be indicted should be tried in Great Britain, and not in Massachusetts. Notice of these acts was received in America on the 10th of May, 1774, and on the 12th of the same month committees from several towns of Massachusetts held a convention at Faneuil Hall and adopted a circular letter prepared by Samuel Adams, which was sent to all the other colonies, reciting these wrongs and asking for sympathy and co-operation.

It is interesting to note that at this time there were very strong jealousies among the colonies and among their respective peoples a lamentable lack of knowledge of and acquaintance with one another. The Virginia planter and the Boston merchant, by either intercourse or acquaintance, had apparently little in common and knew little of each other. This can be readily understood when it is remembered that it took ten days to go from Boston to New York and three weeks to go from Virginia to Massachusetts; a long journey over bad and often dangerous roads. They knew each other only through the medium of report in which the false and true were mixed with local prejudices and limited information. The personal touch was wanting. There were but few newspapers, with limited circulation, and the inventions growing out of the discovery and utilization of steam and electricity were unknown. There were no railroads, no telegraph lines, and racial and religious prejudices ran high. In fact, the people of the respective colonies generally were badly informed, provincial and with limited intellectual horizons. Their time and attention were engrossed in trying to earn a living for themselves and their families in a hostile and wild country, in many cases in spite of savages and wild beasts. It is necessary to get this picture of the situation in order to appreciate what happened, how the sympathy growing out of common wrongs, inherited ideals and hopes of freedom and justice in the hearts and traditions, of these people led them, in spite of all these obstacles of jealousies, distance and unacquaintance, to rally to the call of Massachusetts for sympathy and co-operation. The response to this call was immediate and em-

phatic. Conventions were called in different colonies, and almost with one accord and without previous conference, they in effect declared that the cause of Massachusetts was their cause and that Boston was suffering for that cause. There was sent at once every kind of food and provision, cattle, wheat, fruit, fish, sugar, rice from South Carolina, all as free gifts to this then distant city, with whose people the senders had but little acquaintance and apparently almost nothing in common.

Now, what is the psychology of this "hands across the distance," this free and spontaneous giving of limited substance to a foreign cause and a distant people. It must be remembered that we are nearer to China today than many of these people were to Boston. The answer is what I have indicated in the opening of this communication. These colonies each had treasured ideals and hopes of liberty and justice, and they had suffered common wrongs and injustices from the mother country. The former impelled co-operation, and the latter sympathy against the oppression of one of them. It was a fellow-feeling, a friendly sympathy of hearts and minds which then and there laid the foundation for and out of which sprang a league of friendship which, though unconscious, informal, without declared purpose or limited by written covenants, was, nevertheless, the sapling from which grew the oak of that league of friendship, a league of friendship born of common sufferings, ideals and hopes, which afterwards developed into a league of nations with written covenants under the constitution of the United States. The inception of it, the birth of it, was this rushing together of the hearts and ideals of the peoples of these colonies in response to this call from Massachusetts for sympathy and co-operation.

Avancing a step forward and higher, we see this league of friendship and of nations developing along these same lines until it reaches form and utterance in the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, but as yet without formal covenants. Shortly after this appeal of Massachusetts, the Sons of Liberty in New York proposed a continental congress, and the House of Burgesses in Virginia requested Massachusetts to name a time and place for the meeting of such a congress. This was promptly done by Massachusetts and the 2nd of September, 1774, called for the meeting of that congress. It met. It was an informal conference without defined powers, composed of a chairman, secretary and some committees, simply a league of friendship, and yet it undertook and waged a war for freedom and justice for two years before the adoption of the Declaration of Independence and three years before its purposes and powers were defined by the adoption of the articles of confederation. During that time it conducted a war, appointed officers, raised and equipped an army, established relations with foreign governments in the name of what it called the "United Colonies," and called to the command of its "Continental Army" George Washington, who was to be the living embodiment of this common cause. He commanded the continental armies one year before the Declaration of Independence and about two years before the adoption of the articles of confederation. By the adoption of the articles of confederation, this league of nations, based upon a league of friendship, took form. For the first time the world saw it in definite lines; in fact, it is probable that most of the people of the colonies saw it themselves for the first time in definite lines.

Here it may be well to say a word about these articles of confederation. While they proved imperfect as an instrument for carrying on government and inadequate for the purposes, the ideals and the hopes that these people had at heart, as is shown by the disorder which existed under them after the revolutionary war, and which caused the adoption of the constitution, it is, nevertheless, a fact that they served the more important purpose of putting in the shape of formal written covenants the outlines of this league of nations which had developed from this informal league of friendship. In the articles of

confederation are the wing: Article I. The style of this confederation shall be "The United States of America."

Article III. The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, etc.

Article IV. The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the several states in this union.

Article VI. No state without the consent of the United States in congress assembled shall send any embassy to or receive any embassy from or enter into any conference, agreement, alliance, or treaty with any king, prince, or state, etc.

No two or more states shall enter into any treaty, confederation, or alliance whatsoever between them without the consent of the United States in congress assembled.

No vessels of war shall be kept up in time of peace by any state except such number only as shall be deemed necessary by the United States in congress assembled, for the defense of such state or its trade; nor shall any body of forces be kept up by any state in time of peace except such number only as in the judgment of the United States in congress assembled shall be deemed requisite, etc.

No state shall engage in any war without the consent of the United States in congress assembled, unless such state be actually invaded by enemies, etc.

As pointed out in the opening of this communication, the United States and the allies have been in a league of friendship similar to that of the colonies up to the adoption of the articles of confederation, since the United States entered this war, and that league is in existence at this moment. It fought this war to a victorious conclusion, it arranged the terms of the armistice that is in operation at the present time, and it is now proceeding to arrange the terms of a world peace. If it can do these things through an informal league born of war and necessity, common wrongs, common ideals and hopes, why should it not be continued in formal shape in a league of nations, and why should the great opportunity for so doing which has been brought about by this informal league of friendship be lost and wasted? I have yet to hear any satisfactory answer to these questions. The thing has been done once. Why can't it be done again, particularly under much more favorable conditions of propinquity, intelligence and intercourse?

England profited by the lesson of this league of nations under the constitution of the United States and has formed the British empire, which is a league of nations, as divergent in race, location, religion, tradition, climatic conditions, and inherited ideals as could possibly be imagined. Under it are the Englishman, the Scotchman, the Irishman, the Canadian, the Australian, the Boer of South Africa, the inhabitants of India, etc., yet see how it has stood the test in this war in the splendid way in which all of these people have rallied to the support of the empire!

France today, with her colonies, is a league of nations, and under her banners in this war fought 680,000 colonials from China, Siam, Morocco, Algiers, and other parts of Africa.

These leagues of nations are built up on the principle of equality of economic opportunity, as is the United States of America. Its permanence and safety in each case can only be assured by free navigation upon the seas. Again it is asked, why cannot a league of nations, based upon equality of economic opportunity, free navigation upon the seas guaranteed, be made a reality?

Power, and the control of their destinies has come to dwell with the people of the earth. The principle is now recognized that every nation before God is a nation with the right to own itself. The sparks of light from the anvil of human emancipation are filling the world with a glow. The people are beginning to feel that indifference to their rights is an invitation to despotism and destruction. The fetters of kingship, social caste and the dominance of force, have been broken and are in the scrap pile. The world has gotten free and clear of the thought that government was intended for power. It was intended for human comfort and welfare; it was designed for an apartment house and not an arsenal. The enlightenment and spread of intelligence today is pouring oil into the lamps of the nations. Conscience and intellect have broken through the lines and are leading to the rising sun.